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SIR JOHN JOHNSON,

THE FIRST

AMERICAN-BORN BARONET



AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

AT ITS ANNUAL MEETING, TUESDAY,

JANUARY 6TH, 1880.

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SIR JOHN JOHNSON.

Born 5th Nov., 1742—Died 4th Jan., 1830.

It is well for men to reflect upon two or three expressions in the Bible which demonstrate that injustice is not always to exercise omnipotent sway; and that even the "High Song" of Odin, in the "Edda," was mistaken when it sang:

"One thing I know that never dies,
The verdict passed upon the dead."

Whoever assumed the name of the "Preacher King" to present his own opinions in the Apocryphal book, styled the "Wisdom of Solomon," uttered a multitude of truths worthy of the divinely-inspired son of David, but no grander enunciation than the assurance, "Vice [Falsehood] shall not prevail against Wisdom" [Truth]; and St. Paul, the greatest human being who, *as a fact* and not a fiction, ever trod this little world of man, promised that even to humanity "every man's work shall be made manifest."

It is in this interest—Truth—that the address of the evening is delivered.

Victor Hugo, a truly bright, however erratic, mind, has thrown off, from time to time, sentences which are undoubted sparks of genius. One of these is his denunciation of the delusive lights of Success. "Success," says this great writer, "has a *dupe*—History!" It has another dupe—Public Opinion; and this latter is nowhere blinded by such obliquity, if not actual opacity, of vision as in this country; preferring gilt to gold, and bestowing the highest prizes on men, who, in comparison with demigods like Thomas, are of mere clay.

The whole of our Revolutionary history is a myth. A member of this very society has torn some of the coverings from apparently slight scratches and revealed festering sores. It would be well if there were other practitioners as daring.

The effort of this evening will be simply the vindication of a gentleman who has borne up, like an Atlas, under the hundred years of obloquy heaped upon his memory, a load of which he can alone be relieved by outspoken truth.

The present King of Sweden has just published a species of vindication of one who was a grand hero and a great soldier, although historian, poet and playwright have united in damning his memory with faint praise, summed up in the epithet: "The Madman of the North." Could this opprobrious term be heard by Charles the Twelfth, he might exclaim with St. Paul, and with equal justice, "I am not mad?" for Charles was a patriot King, a soldier, a General, a Man—the latter in the grandest sense of the word—without

any vice, with manifold virtues. He failed, and he fell; and the curs that barked from afar off at the living lion howled in triumph over the kingly creature which Fortune not their fangs tore down.

The royal author—Oscar II., in the following eloquent passages quoted, doubtless refers to the misjudgments of his countrymen in regard to prominent men who sustained the losing side in the civil wars of his country, as well to those of Swedes and foreigners upon his predecessor:

"The past appeals to the impartiality of the future. History replies. But, often, generations pass away ere that reply can be given in a determinate form. For not until the voices of contemporaneous panegyric and censure are hushed; not until passionate pulses have ceased to beat; until flattery has lost its power to charm, and calumny to villify, can the verdict of history be pronounced. Then from the clouds of error and prejudice the sun of truth emerges, and light is diffused in bright rays, of ever increasing refulgency and breadth. * * Every age has its own heroes—men who seem to embody the prevailing characteristics of their relative epochs, and to present to after ages the idealized expression of their chief tendencies. Such men must be judged by no ordinary standard. History must view their actions as a whole, not subject them to separate tests, or examine them through the lens of partial criticism and narrow-minded prejudice."

In this connection old Æsop steps in with one of the remarkable fables which have outlived his gods and cosmogony by over a decade of centuries. A lion, observing the sculptured group of a hunter strangling one of the lords of the forest, growls out: "What a different piece of art—if lions were sculptors—would be standing on yonder pedestal! It would be the hunter torn in pieces by the lion."

To no class who have ever lived can such remarks as these apply as to the Loyalists, nicknamed "Tories," of the American Revolution. Modern Italy has sought to efface the remembrance of wrongs done to the Waldenses. Bigoted Spain is opening her eyes to the mingled chivalry and industry of the Moors, who made their peninsula the world's centre for learning; who clothed the southern sides of her rugged sierras with luscious vineyards; and made her arid valleys to blossom like the rose. France wails for the Huguenot element which her priest-ridden, lecherous King drove out to scatter its seed throughout the world, and enrich his enemies with their invincible swords, but, far better, their in-

domitable enterprise and energy. This country—ours—is yet unwilling to accord justice to the race or class it oppressed and expelled, during the Revolution, because to reverse the verdict would be to condemn the successful party to a judgment more discreditable and deserved than that meted out to the victims of fidelity—the Loyalists of 1776. The Waldenses or persecuted Protestants of Savoy, under their pastor and colonel, Arnaud, in August–September, 1689, by “their thirty days march,” and attempt to reconquer their native seats, furnished “unquestionably the most epic achievement of modern times,” and won world-wide celebrity and glory through seeking, sword in hand, to recover their desecrated ancestral homes. Why, then, should the slightest breath of censure cloud the crystalline memories of the Loyalists, who imitated their resolution and perilled all, not for gain but for duty; not for pay but for principle; and all, in this, were eminently faithful, paying, in many cases, what Lincoln styled “the last full measure of devotion.” The patriots, so-called, had much to gain individually, and, with comparatively few exceptions, very little to lose. All these considerations suggest a direct appeal to the calm thought and honest judgment of the generation which has just lived through “the Great American Conflict.” The Loyalists of the Revolution were identical with the Union party in the *Rebel* (not *Confederate*) States during the “Slaveholders’ Rebellion;” and the very title, “Loyal men,” was applied to the party that sustained the national government in 1860–65, as was, justly, the term “rebels” to those who sought its overthrow.

The father of Sir John Johnson—the subject of this address—was the famous Sir William Johnson, Baronet, Major-General in the Royal Service and British Superintendent of Indian Affairs. This gentleman was, perhaps, the most prominent man in the province of New York during the decade which preceded the Declaration of Independence. Whether a Jansen—a descendant of one of those indomitable Hollanders who went over with William III. to subdue Ireland, and anglicised their names—or of English race proper, Sir William was a strong example of those common-sense men who know how to grapple fortune by the forelock and not clutch in vain the tresses which flowed down her receding back. He opened two of the most productive valleys in the world—the Mohawk and Schoharie—to emigration; and with the development of their riches rose to a height of opulence and influence unequalled in the “Thirteen Colonies.” Just in his dealings with all men, he was particularly so with the Indians, and acquired a power over the latter such as no other individual ever possessed. Transferred from civil jurisdiction to military command he exhibited no less ability in the more dangerous and laborious exigencies of war. He, it was, who first stemmed successfully the tide of French invasion, and turned it back at Lake George, in 1755; receiving from his sovereign, in recognition of his able services, the first hereditary baronetcy in this country. At “Johnson Hall” he lived in truly baronial state, and no other provincial magnate ever

exhibited such affluence and grandeur as was displayed by him in his castle and home on the Mohawk.

His greatest achievement, perhaps, was the defeat of a superior French force seeking to relieve Fort Niagara and his capture of this noted stronghold in 1759. The distinguished British general and military historian, Sir Edward Cust, in his “Annals of the Wars,” refers in the following language to this notable exploit of Sir William: “This gentleman, like Clive, was a self-taught general, who, by dint of innate courage and natural sagacity, without the help of a military education or military experience, rivalled, if not eclipsed, the greatest commanders. Sir William Johnson omitted nothing to continue the vigorous measures of the late general [Frideaux killed] and added to them everything his own genius could suggest. The troops, who respected, and the provincials, who adored, him,” were not less devoted than the Six Nations of Indians who gladly followed the banner of himself and his less fortunate son.

Thus, with a sway incomprehensible in the present day, beloved, respected and feared by law breakers and evil doers, the mortal enemies of his semi-civilized wards—the Six Nations—he lived a life of honor; and died, not by his own hand, as stated by prejudiced tradition, but a victim to that energy, which, although it never bent in the service of king or country, had to yield to years and nature. Sick, and thereby unequal to the demands of public business, he presided at a council, 11 July, 1774, spoke and directed, until his ebbing strength failed, and could not be restored by the inadequate remedial measures at hand on the borders of the wilderness. To no one man does Central New York owe so much of her physical development as to Sir William Johnson.

Wedded in 1739, to a Hollandish or German maiden, amply endowed with the best gifts of nature, both physical and mental, “good sound sense, and a mild and gentle disposition,” Sir William was by her the father of one son, born in 1742, and several daughters. The latter are sufficiently described in a charming, well-known book, entitled “The Memoirs of an American Lady”—Mrs. Grant, of Laggan. The former was Sir John Johnson, a grander representative of the transition era of this State, than those whom Success and its Dupe—History, have placed in the national “Walkalla.” While yet a youth this son accompanied his father to his fields of battle, and when the generality, of boys are at school or college, witnessed two of the bloodiest conflicts on which the fate of the colony depended. He had scarcely attained majority when he was entrusted with an independent command, and in it displayed an ability, a fortitude, and a judgment, worthy of riper years and wider experience.

Sent out to England by his father in 1765, “to try to wear off the rusticity of a country education,” immediately upon his presentation at court he received from his sovereign an acknowledgment—partly due to the reputation of his parent, and partly to his own tact and capacity—such as stands alone in colonial his-

tory. Although his father, Sir William, was already a knight and baronet for service to the crown, John was himself knighted, at the age of twenty-three; and thus the old-new baronial hall at Johnstown sheltered two recipients, in the same family and generation, of the honor of knighthood. There is no parallel to this double distinction in American biography, and but few in the family annals of older countries. When they occur they have been made the theme of minstrel, poet and historian.

This was the era when "New York was in its happiest state."

In the Summer of 1773, and in his thirtieth year, Sir John Johnson married the beautiful Mary—or, as she was affectionately called, "Polly"—Watts, aged nineteen. She was born in New York 27th Oct., 1753, and died 7th August, 1815, at Mount Johnson, near Montreal. Mrs. Grant, of Laggan, has left us a charming pen portrait of this bright maiden:

"Returning for a short time to town in Spring I found aunt's house much enlivened by a very agreeable visitor; this was Miss W.(atts), daughter to the Hon. Mr. W.(atts), of the council. Her elder sister was afterwards Countess of Cassilis, and she herself was, long afterwards, married to the only native of the continent, I believe, who ever succeeded to the title of baronet. She possessed much beauty, and understanding and vivacity. Her playful humor exhilarated the whole household. I regarded her with admiration and delight, and her fanciful excursions afforded great amusement to aunt, and were like a gleam of sunshine amidst the gloom occasioned by the spirit of contention which was let loose among all manner of people."

The graces which the authoress commemorated are corroborated by others. Even after many years of trial and sorrow, her portrait bears out the characteristics attributed to her. Her features are most familiar to the relator, as her portrait hung in the chamber occupied by him in youth. The elder sister referred to as likewise a bright and charming woman, as appears from her picture in Colzean Castle, one of the hereditary abodes of her husband, the eleventh Earl, who built the stately mansion, No. 1 Broadway, in this city. The Castle, from its commanding site, looks forth over the Frith of Clyde, upon a remarkable freak of nature, the stupendous insulated rock, or rather mountain, from which her son derived his title as first Marquis of Ailsa. Her family had long been distinguished in colonial annals. Her grandfather was of the WATT family of "Rose Hill," near—now within—the limits of Edinburgh, and as "of that ilk," had been so known for over a century. The old family mansion is yet standing, and although degraded into the service of a railroad company, still in its degeneration and partial ruin attests its former stateliness. Her father, Hon. JOHN WATTS, Senior, was one of the first men of the colony. He had vindicated the rights of his fellow citizens against the military oppressions of the day. Nevertheless, the "Sons of Liberty"—or rather "License," made him one of their first victims. To save his life he became an exile; and an exile he died in Wales, and his bones, far away from those of kith and kin, found a resting place in the parish church of St. James,

in Piccadilly, London, near the remains of his sister, Lady Warren, the wife of the famous Admiral who took Louisburg in 1745. "John Watts, Esq., was an eminent merchant of New York, a gentleman of family, of character and reputation, opulent and of a disposition remarkable for the most unbounded hospitality. He served many years as a representative for the city of New York, and more perhaps, afterwards, as one of his Majesty's Council. He was proscribed by the rebel Legislature of New York, his person attained, and his estate confiscated," although he had not been in the country for over a year before the Declaration of Independence.

Had the crown been victorious this John Watts would have been the Lieutenant-Governor and Acting Governor of this Province, succeeding his wife's grandfather, the famous Cadwallader Colden. His son and namesake, John Watts, was the last royal Recorder of the city of New York, remained here during the revolution; and after it, was Speaker of the State Assembly and Member of Congress. Defeated at the polls by the scion of a family aristocratic in sentiment however democratic in politics, who aroused the people against him by disseminating hand bills demanding if freemen could trust the kinsman, connection and friend of the English nobility, he retired from public life. This disappointment did not dim his philanthropy; and to him this city owes one of the noblest charitable institutions in its midst—the Leake and Watts Orphan Home. A younger brother, Stephen, "an elegant and charming youth," entered the British service; and following the fortunes of his brother-in-law, Sir John Johnson, left a limb and nearly his life on the bloody field of Oriskany. So fearfully mangled that few officers have survived such a complication of wounds and barbarous treatment, he was saved through the fidelity of Indians and his own soldiers, and carried back to Quebec—a long and weary transit. He lived to a good old age in England, and left a progeny of sons, who rose to high and honorable trusts in various branches of the royal service.

The eldest brother, Robert, married Mary, eldest daughter of Maj.-Gen., titular Lord, or Earl of, Stirling, who disinherited her because she had married a Loyalist, and clung to the fortunes of her husband.

Inheriting his father's dignities and responsibilities, Sir John Johnson could not have been otherwise than a champion of his sovereign's rights. If he had turned his coat to save his property, like some of the prominent patriots, he would have been a renegade, if not worse. Some of the greater as well as the lesser lights of patriotism had already cast longing glances upon his rich possessions in the Mohawk Valley. Its historian tells us that in a successful rebellion the latter counted upon dividing his princely domains into snug little farms for themselves. The sperm of anti-rentism was germinating already; although it took over sixty to seventy years to thoroughly enlist legislative assistance, and perfect spoliation in the guise of modern agrarian law. Surrounded by a devoted tenantry, backed by those "Romans of America," the "Six Nations," it was not easy "to bell the cat" by force. It is not politic to revive hereditary animosities

by the mention of names in this hall. Sufficient to say, might prevailed over right, and Sir John was placed under what the Albany Committee chose to define a "parole." Modern courts of inquiry, especially in the United States since 1800, have decided that such a system of paroling is in itself invalid, and that individuals subjected to such a procedure are absolved *de facto* from any pledges.

The Albany Committee had no legitimate power to impose a parole upon a dutiful subject, more particularly an officer of the King. This was certainly the case at any period prior to the Declaration of Independence. All these events occurred from six weeks to six months prior to the date of this instrument. It was simply an operation of mob law. The rioters in New York, in July, 1863, had just as much rightful authority to place under parole a National or Municipal officer captured while supporting the law and endeavoring to maintain order, or even a private citizen opposed to these riotous proceedings, as this Albany Committee, in a great measure self-constituted, to put and hold under what they chose to call a parole in the Winter and Spring of 1776, an important agent of the crown, exercising authority by the appointment and commission of legitimate government.

This address has now reached a point where it seems proper to invite the attention of the audience to the consideration of the charge in relation to the violation of this parole which the rebels or patriots, or whatever they may be most properly styled, have brought forward so prominently and persistently to brand the character of Sir John. They say he violated his parole and fled *their tender mercies*. This common charge of American historical writers, that Sir John broke his parole, is proven to be "without foundation and untrue." The testimony as to the untruth of this popular charge, can be found in publications on the shelves of the library of this very institution. To cite it textually would occupy more time than can be devoted to the whole address; sufficient will be presented to establish the main facts. It may be as well, however, to premise; that Count d'Estaing, the first French Commander who brought assistance to this country, had notoriously broken his parole, and yet no American writer has ever alluded to the fact as prejudicial to his honor. It did not serve their purpose. The French held that Washington violated his parole; and Michelet, a devoted friend to liberty and this country, feelingly refers to this to demonstrate one of the heart-burnings which France had to overcome in lending assistance to the revolted colonies. How many Southern officers, in spite of their paroles, met us on battlefield after battlefield. Regiments and brigades, if not divisions, paroled at Vicksburg, were encountered within a few weeks in the conflicts around Chattanooga. French generals, paroled by the Prussians, did not hesitate to accept active commands in even the shortest spaces of time. Under the circumstances this charge against Sir John was a pretext; but weak as it is, it is not true. Power in all ages has not been delicate in its choice of means to destroy a dangerous antagonist.

The magnificent Louis XIV. never hesitat-

ed to imitate the employment of hiring assassins so successfully initiated by that champion of the Papal Church, Philip II. Thus the Duke of Alva lured Horn and Egmont into the toils which they exchanged for the scaffold. Abd-el-Kader surrendered on terms which were only granted to be violated. And blackest of examples, how was the chivalric Osceola inveigled into chains. Had Sir John violated his parole, circumstances justified him, but he did not do so.

What is the truth of this charge?

Not satisfied with putting him under parole, the Albany Committee, egged on by the patriots (sic) of Tryon county, determined to seize Sir John Johnson's person.

It may be stated that "the antipathy" of the prominent family and its friends in Albany to the Johnsons and their connections arose from the Indian trade. The close relationship of blood never seems to have had the slightest power over the gnawing thirst for gain. The Johnson influence had been for a hundred and thirty-eight years in favor of the Indians and against the Albany traders. This was the leaven whose fermentation grew gradually stronger and stronger in its power to foment a bitterness which was augmented to the intensest degree of political antagonism.

In January, 1776, a raid was made upon "Johnson Hall" in consequence of the affidavit of an imposter. This reflected no credit on those engaged in it. Then it was that Sir John found himself placed under what has been styled his parole. From this time forward Sir John was harassed and hounded to the utmost extent of human patience and endurance. Finally, in March, the evacuation of Boston by the British gave a fresh stimulus to the successful colonists, and the Albany Committee made up their minds that the time had now come to deprive Sir John of his personal liberty. To justify such an outrage they had either to violate their own compact or release him from it. As the party endangered was not destitute of intelligence, it was necessary, in order to entrap him, to resort to deception. The principal agent in this design has left a letter, in which he emphasizes that care must be taken to prevent Sir John's being apprized of the real design of his opponents, and he therefore dispatched a communication, which, though cunningly conceived, was not sufficiently so to conceal the latent treachery. As Van der Does on Leyden wrote to Valdes, the Spanish General besieging and trying to tempt him to surrender:

"Fistula dulce canit volucrem, dum decipit ancep."

"The fowler plays sweet notes on his pipe when he spreads his net for the bird."

So Sir John was not deluded by the specious words of his enemies seeking to enmesh him.

Sir John was to be simultaneously released from his parole and made a prisoner. The officer who carried the communication discharging Sir John from his parole, was the bearer of directions to arrest him as soon as he had read it, "and make him a close prisoner, and carefully guard him that he may not have the least opportunity to escape." Sir John still had some friends among those who were now in power, and received intelligence of what was going

en. He exercised ordinary discretion, and, followed by devoted friends and retainers, escaped before the trap could be sprung upon him.

[There was no real semblance of government until the States began to organize. New York did not do so until 1777. The Thirteen Colonies were not *de jure* belligerents in any wise until the Mother Country established a regular exchange of prisoners. They were not belligerents to the world in the real sense of the term until their acknowledgment as a power by France, and Louis XVI. entered into a treaty of alliance with them. Great Britain conceded all belligerent rights when it appointed commissioners, in 1778, to treat with the Federal Congress. Previous to this the Thirteen Colonies occupied an abnormal position without anything beyond a very limited recognition as a legitimate government. Consequently what right had the Albany Committee to place a servant of the crown under parole? Moreover, according to all just principles of paroles, the parties arrogating to themselves the right to place Johnson under parole, were bound, when they undertook to rescind it, to place him in the same position as when the parole was exacted—the same as to means of resistance or escape—and not to revoke his parole and instantly and simultaneously arrest and to incarcerate him.]

There is, to repeat and emphasize, an ample sufficiency of evidence in existence and accessible in this building to prove that the common charge of American historical writers is *without foundation and untrue.*"

Sir John fled, but he did not fly unaccompanied; and among his subsequent associates, officers and soldiers, were men of as good standing as those who remained behind to profit by the change of authority. Many of the latter, however, expiated their sins or errors on the day of reckoning at Oriskany.

Not able to seize the man, disappointed treachery determined to capture a woman, the victim this time was his wife. Why? The answer is in the words of a letter preserved in the series of the well-known Peter Force, which says: "It is the general opinion of people in Tryon county that, while Lady Johnson is kept a kind of hostage, Sir John will not carry matters to excess."

Lady Johnson must have been a lucky woman; for even when under constraint, and in the most delicate condition that woman can be, she exulted in the prospects soon hearing that Sir John would soon ravage the country on the Mohawk river. To quote another letter from the highest authority, "It has been hinted that she is a good security to prevent the effects of her husband's rulence."

With a determination even superior to that inhibited by her husband, because she was a woman and he a man, Lady Johnson in midwinter, January, 1777, in disguise, made her escape through hardships which would appal a person in her position in the present day. Through the deepest snows, through the extreme cold, through lines of ingrates and enemies, she made her way into this loyal city. Her story reads like a romance. People cite Flora McDonald, Grace Darrell, Florence Nightingale. We had a heroine in our midst who

displayed a courage as lofty as theirs, but she is forgotten, because she was the wife of a man who had the courage to avenge her wrongs, even upon the victors, and chastise her enemies and persecutors as well as his own.

All this occurred prior to the Spring of 1777.

Sir Guy Carleton, undoubtedly the grandest character among the British military chieftains in America, received Sir John with open arms; and immediately gave him opportunities to raise a regiment, which made itself known and felt along the frontier, throughout the war. With a fatal parsimony of judgment and its application, the Crown never accumulated sufficient troops at decisive points, but either delayed their arrival or afterward diverted or frittered their strength away. In 1777, when Burgoyne was preparing for his invasion of New York, down the Hudson, St. Leger was entrusted with a similar advance down the Mohawk. Sir Henry Clinton, an able strategist and a brave soldier, but an indolent, nervous mortal, and an inefficient commander, recorded a sagacious opinion on this occasion, viz.: that to St. Leger was assigned the most important part in the programme with the most inadequate means to carry it out. To play this part successfully required a much larger force; and yet to take a fort garrisoned by nine hundred and fifty not inefficient troops, with sufficient artillery, and fight the whole available population of Tryon county in arms beside, St. Leger had only 675 whites and an aggregation of about 1000 Indians from twenty-two different tribes, gathered from the remotest points administered by British officers, even from the extreme western shores of Lake Superior. To batter this fort he had a few small pieces of ordnance, which were about as effective as pop-guns; and were simply adequate, as he says in his report, to "tease," without injuring, the garrison. His second in command was Sir John Johnson.

For the relief of Fort Stanwix, Maj.-Gen. Harkheimer, Sir John's old antagonist, gathered up all the valid men in Tryon county, variously stated at from 800 and 900 to 1000, constituting four or five regiments of militia, and some Oneida Indians. These latter, traitors to a fraternal bond of centuries, seemed about as useless to their new associates as they were faithless to their old ties. To meet Harkheimer, St. Leger sent forward Sir John Johnson, and it is now clearly established beyond a doubt that his ability planned and his determination fought the battle of Oriskany. Had the Indians shown anything like the pluck of white men, not a provincial would have escaped. In spite of their inefficiency, Sir John's whites alone would have accomplished the business had it not been for "a shower of blessing" sent by Providence, and a recall to the assistance of St. Leger. As it was, this, the bloodiest battle of the Revolution at the North, was indecisive. Harkheimer lost his life, likewise hundreds of his followers, and Tryon county suffered such a terrific calamity, that to use the inference of its historian, if it smiled again during the war it smiled through tears. The iron will of Schuyler, another old antagonist of Sir John, sent Arnold, the best soldier of the Revolution, to

save Fort Stanwix, the key to the Mohawk valley. The rapid advance of this brilliant leader and the dastardly conduct and defection of the Indians, preserved the beleaguered work; and St. Leger and Sir John were forced to retire. On this salvation of Fort Stanwix, and not on Bennington, properly Hoosic or Walloomcoik nor on Saratoga, hinged the fate of the Burgoyne invasion and the eventual certainty of independence. No part of the failure is chargeable to Sir John.

As before mentioned, the English war administration seemed utterly inadequate to the occasion. They had not been able to grapple with its exigencies while the colonies were "doing for themselves," as Mazzini expressed it. When France and Spain entered the list, and Burgoyne's army had been eliminated from the war problem, they seem to have lost their heads; and, in 1778, abandoned all the fruits of the misdirected efforts of their main army. Clinton succeeded to Howe in the field, and Haldimand to Carleton in Canada. Haldimand, a Swiss by birth and a veteran by service, was as deficient in the priceless practical abilities in which his predecessor excelled. Those who knew him considered him an excellent professional soldier, but for administration and organization his gifts were small. He was so afraid that the French and Provincials would invade and dismember the remaining British possessions in North America, that he not only crippled Clinton in a measure, by constant demands for troops, but he was afraid to entrust such brilliant partisans as Sir John Johnson with forces sufficient to accomplish anything of importance. He suffered raids when he should have launched invasions, and he kept every company and battalion for the defence of a territory, which, except in its ports, was amply protected by nature and distance. Washington played on his timidity just as he afterward fingered the nervousness of Clinton. Thus the rest of 1777, the whole of 1778, and the greater part of 1779 was passed by Sir John in compulsory inactivity. He was undoubtedly busy. But, like thousands of human efforts which cost such an expenditure of thought and preparation, but are fruitless in marked results, their records are "writ in water."

In 1779 occurred the famous invasion of the territory of the Six Nations by Sullivan. In one sense it was triumphant. It did the devil's work thoroughly. It converted a series of blooming gardens, teeming orchards and productive fields into wastes and ashes. It was a disgrace to developing civilization, and, except to those writers who worship nothing but temporary success, it called forth some of the most scathing condemnations ever penned by historians. When white men scalp and flay Indians, and convert the skins of the latter's thighs into boot-tops, the question suggests itself, which were the savages, the Continental troops or the Indians. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that for every Indian slain and Indian hut consumed in this campaign, a thousand white men, women and children paid the penalty; and it is almost unexceptionally admitted that the indistinguishable hatred of the redskins to the United

States dates from this raid of Sullivan worthy of the Scottish chief who smoked his enemies to death in a cavern, or of a Pellissier, a St. Arnaud or a Pretorius.

Sullivan's military objective was Fort Niagara, the basis, for about a century, of incursions, French and British, upon New York. Why he did not make the attempt requires a consideration which would occupy more time than is assigned to this whole address. There were adversaries in his front who did not fear pop-gun artillery like the Indians, and were not to be dismayed by a lively cannonade as at Newtown. Haldimand had sent Sir John Johnson to organize a body of about two hundred and fifty white troops, besides the Indians, and these were rapidly concentrating upon Sullivan, when the latter countermarched. American historians give their reasons for this retreat; British writers explain it very differently. In any event this expedition was the last military command enjoyed by Sullivan. The Scripture here affords an expression which may not be inapplicable. "He departed without being desired."

Sir John's further aggressive movements were prevented by the early setting in of Winter, which rendered the navigation of Lake Ontario too dangerous for the certain dispatch of the necessary troops and adequate supplies.

The extreme search for information regarding to the details of the movements upon this frontier, has been hitherto baffled. According to a reliable contemporary record, Sir John Johnson, Col. Butler and Capt. Brandt captured Fort Stanwix on the 2d of November, 1779. This is the only aggressive operation of the year attributed to him.

In 1780 Sir John was given head, or let loose, and he made the most of his time. In this year he made two incursions into the Mohawk Valley, the first in May and the second in October.

There is a very curious circumstance connected with this raid. The burial of his valuable plate and papers, and the guarding of the secret of this deposit by a faithful slave, although sold into the hands of his master's enemies; the recovery of the silver through this faithful negro, and the transport of the treasures, in the knapsacks of forty soldiers, through the wilderness to Canada, has been related in so many books that there is no need of a repetition of the details. One fact, however, is not generally known. Through dampness the papers had been wholly or partially destroyed; and this may account for a great many gaps and involved questions in narratives connected with the Johnson family. The "treasure-trove" eventually was of no service to anyone. God maketh the wrath of man to praise Him; and although Sir John was the rod of His anger, the staff of His indignation and the weapon of His vengeance for the injustice and barbarisms shown by the Americans to the Six Nations, but especially during the preceding year the instrument was not allowed to profit, personally, by the service. The silver, etc., retrieved at such a cost of peril, of life, of desolation and of suffering was not destined to benefit anyone. What, amid fire and sword and death and devastation, had been wrenched from the enemy was placed on shipboard for conveyance to England, and, by

the "irony of fate," the vessel foundered in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and its precious freight, like that described in the "Nebelungen Lied," sank into the treasury of so much of earth's richest spoils and possessions, the abyss of the sea.

It is said that his second invasion of this year was co-ordinate with the plan of Sir Henry Clinton, of which the basis was the surrender of West Point by Arnold. If so, the former bore to the latter the same relation that the advance of St. Leger did in respect to Burgoyne. St. Leger's failure burst the combined movement of 1777; and Arnold's abortive attempt exploded the conception of 1780. So that Sir John's movement, which was to have been one of a grand military series, unhappily for his reputation became an apparent "mission of vengeance," executed, however, with a thoroughness which was felt far beyond the district upon which the visitation came—came in such a terrible guise, that a hundred years have scarcely weakened the bitterness of its memories. Whatever else may be debited to him, it can be said of him, as of Graham of Claverhouse, that he did his work effectively.

Although one hundred years have scarcely passed away since the events considered in this address, there are almost as conflicting accounts of the personal appearance of Sir John as there are antagonistic judgments in respect to his character. By some he has been represented as over six feet in height; by others as not taller than the ordinary run of men in his district. Doubtless in mature years he was a stout or stalwart figure, and this, always at least to some extent, detracts from height, and deceives unless everything is in exact proportion. The only likeness in existence which is in accordance with descriptions, an engraving of F. Bartolozzi, R. A., is a rare one from some contemporary work, representing him in his uniform. It is not inconsistent with the pictures of him ordinarily produced in well known works. These, however, from the costume and expression, seem to have been taken at an earlier date.

[Mr. de Lancey, at page 642 (Note lv.), Vol. 2, appended to Jones' "History of New York," etc., furnishes a description of Sir John, which tallies exactly with the colored engraving by Bartolozzi, in the speaker's possession.

"He was a handsome, well-made man, a little short, with blue eyes, light hair, a fresh complexion, and a firm but pleasant expression. He was quick and decided in disposition and manner, and possessed of great endurance."

He has been "described as cold, haughty, cruel and implacable, of questionable" courage, and with a feeble sense of personal honor. Mr. William C. Bryant, in his admirable biographical sketch, disposes of this repulsive picture with a single honest sentence: "The detested title of *Tory*, in fact, was a synonym for all these unamiable qualities."

According to a recently found sketch of Charleston, South Carolina, published in 1854, it would appear that every American opposed to French Jacobinism was stigmatized as an aristocrat; and when Washington approved of Jay's treaty of 1795, six prominent advocates of his policy were hung in effigy and polluted with every mark of indignity; then

burned. Even the likeness of Washington, at full length, on a sign, is reported to have been much abused by the rabble. These patriots experienced the same treatment accorded to the character of Sir John. The procession at Poughkeepsie, in this State, to ratify the adoption of the Federal Constitution, came near ending in bloodshed. Any one opposed to slavery, when it existed, risked his life, south of "Mason and Dixon's line," if he uttered his sentiments in public. No virtues would have saved him from violence. On the other hand, there were classes and communities at the North who would not concede a redeeming quality to a slaveholder. Passion intensifies public opinion. The masses never reflect.

Here let a distinction be drawn which very few, even thinking persons, duly appreciate. The rabble are not the people. Knox, in his "Races of Men," draws this distinction most clearly. And yet in no country to such an extent as in the United States is this mistake so often made. Old Rome was styled by its own best thinkers and annalists "the cesspool of the world;" and if any modern State deserves this scathing imputation, it is this very State of New York. Count Tallyrand-Perigord said that as long as there is sufficient virtue in the thinking classes to assimilate what is good, and reject what is vicious in immigration, there is true progress and real prosperity. When the poison becomes superior to the resistive and assimilative power, the descent begins. It is to pander to the rabble, not the people, that such men as Sir John Johnson are misrepresented. Such a course is politic for demagogues. To them the utterance of the truth is suicidal, because they only could exist through such perversions worthy of a Machiavelli. They thrive through political Jesuitism. The Roman populace were maintained and restrained by "*panem et circenses*." The modern voting rabble feed like them—to use the Scripture expression—on the wind of delusion; and it is this method of portraiture which enabled the Albany Committee to strike down Sir John, confiscate his property and drive him forth; and carry out like purposes in our very midst to-day.

People of the present day can scarcely conceive the virulence of vituperation which characterized the political literature of a century since. Hough, in his "*Northern Invasion*," has a note on this subject which applies to every similar case. The gist of it is this: The opinions of local populations in regard to prominent men were entirely biased, if not founded upon their popularity or the reverse. If modern times were to judge of the character of Hannibal by the pictures handed down by the gravest of Roman historians, he would have to be regarded as a man destitute of almost every redeeming trait except courage and ability or astuteness; whereas, when the truth is sifted out, it is positively certain that the very vices attributed to the great Carthaginian should be transferred to his Latin adversaries.

Sir John was not cold. He was one of the most affectionate of men. Mr. Bryant tells us that he was not "haughty," but, on the contrary, displayed qualities which are totally inconsistent with coldness. "His manners were

peculiarly mild, gentle and winning. He was remarkably fond of the society of children, who, with their marvellous insight into character, bestowed upon him the full measure of their unquestioning love and faith. He was also greatly attached to all domestic animals, and notably very humane and tender in his treatment of them." Another writer, commenting upon these traits, remarks: "His peculiar characteristic of tenderness to children and animals, makes me think that the stories of his inhumanity during the War of the Revolution cannot be true."

He was not "cruel." A number of instances are recorded to the contrary, in themselves sufficient to disprove such a sweeping charge.

The honest Bryant penned a paragraph which is pertinent here in this connection.

"Sir John, certainly, inherited many of the virtues which shed lustre upon his father's name. His devotion to the interests of his government; his energetic and enlightened administration of important trusts; his earnest championship of the barbarous race which looked up to him as a father and a friend; his cheerful sacrifice of a princely fortune and estate on what he conceived to be the altar of patriotism, cannot be controverted by the most virulent of his detractors. The atrocities which were perpetrated by the invading forces under his command are precisely those which, in our annals, have attached a stigma to the names of Montcalm and Burgoyne. To restrain an ill-disciplined rabble of exiled Tories and ruthless savages was beyond the power of men whose humanity has never in other instances been questioned."

The majority of writers absolve Montcalm; and Burgoyne disclaimed, and almost conclusively proved, that he was not responsible for the charges brought against him by the grandiloquent Gates and others, who did not hesitate to draw upon their imagination to make a point. Sir John, with his own lips, declared, in regard to the cruelties suffered by the Whigs during his first inroad, that "their Tory neighbors, and not himself, were blamable for those acts." It is said that Sir John much regretted the death of those who were esteemed by his father, and censured the murderer. But how was he to punish! Can the United States at this day, with all its power, punish the individual perpetrators of cruelties along the Western frontier and among the Indians! It is justly remarked that if the "Six Nations" had an historian, the Chemung and Genesee valleys, desolated by Sullivan, would present no less glowing a picture than of those of the Schoharie and Mohawk, which experienced the visitations of Sir John. He, at all events, ordered churches to be spared. Sullivan's vengeance was indiscriminate, and left nothing standing in the shape of a building which his fires could reach. Sir John more than once interposed his disciplined troops between the savages and their intended victims. He redeemed captives with his own money; and while without contradiction he punished a guilty district with military execution, it was not directed by his orders or countenance against individuals. Hough, for himself, and quoting others, admits that "no violence was offered to women and children." There is

nothing on record or hinted to show that he refused mercy to prisoners; no instance of what was termed "Tarleton's quarter" is cited; and it is very questionable if cold-blooded peculation in the American administrative corps did not kill off incalculably more in the course of a single campaign, than fell at the hands of all, white and red, directed by Johnson, during the war.

As to the epithet "implacable," that amounts to nothing. To the masses, anyone who punishes a majority, even tempering justice with mercy, provided he moves in a sphere above the plane of those who are the subjects of the discipline, is always considered not only unjust but cruel. The patriots or rebels of Tryon county had worked their will on the persons of the family and the properties of Sir John Johnson; and he certainly gave them a good deep draught from the goblet they had originally forced upon his lips. He did not live up to the Christian code which all men preach and no man practices, and assuredly did not turn the other cheek to the smiter, or offer his cloak to him who had already stolen his coat. I claim there was great justification for his conduct. The masses can understand nothing that is not brought home to them in letters of fire and of suffering. Their compassion and their fury are both the blaze of straw; and their cruelty is as enduring as the heat of red hot steel. The manner in which the construction of elevated railroads has been permitted in the city of New York, to the detriment and even comparative ruin of individuals, shows how little the public care if the few suffer provided it is benefited. Sir John may be taken as representing the parties who were most deeply injured by such a system. If these blew up a portion of the road with the trains upon it containing the directors and prominent stockholders, the laws of this State, like those favoring "Anti-rentism," and seemingly adjusted for the protection of wrong, would term such an act conspiracy and murder. Whereas disinterested parties, knowing the facts, might esteem it a righteous retribution, which, although punishable as a crime against society, was not without excuse as humanity is constituted.

There is only one more charge against Sir John to dispose of, viz., that "his courage was questionable." The accusation in regard to his having a "feeble sense of personal honor" rests upon the stereotyped fallacy in regard to the violation of his parole. This has already been treated of and shown to be unsustained by evidence. In fact, it was proved that he did not do so. In this connection it is necessary to cite a few more pertinent words from the impartial William C. Bryant. This author says: "Sir John's sympathies were well known, and he was constrained to sign a pledge that he would remain neutral during the struggle then impending. There is no warrant for supposing that Sir John, when he submitted to this degradation, secretly determined to violate his promise on the convenient plea of duress, or upon grounds more rational and quieting to his conscience. The jealous espionage to which he was afterwards exposed—the plot to seize upon his person and restrain his liberty—doubtless furnished the coveted pretext for breaking faith with the 'rebels.'" "

The charge of "questionable courage" is utterly ridiculous.

In the first place, it originated with his personal enemies, and if such evidence were admissible, it is disproved by facts. There is scarcely any amount of eulogy which has not been lavished upon Arnold's expedition from the Kennebec, across the great divide between Maine and Canada, down to the siege of Quebec, and the same praise has been extended to Clarke for his famous march across the drowned lands of Indiana. Arnold deserves all that can be said for him, and so does Clarke, and everyone who has displayed equal energy and intrepidity. It is only surprising that similar justice has not been extended to Sir John. It is universally conceded that when he made his escape from his persecutors, in 1778, and plunged into the howling wilderness to preserve his liberty and honor, he encountered all the suffering that it seemed possible for a man to endure. As a friend remarks, one who is well acquainted with the Adirondack wilderness, such a traverse would be an astonishing feat, even under favorable circumstances and season, at this day. Sir John was nineteen days in making the transit, and this, too, at a season when snow and drifts still blocked the Indian paths, the only recognized thoroughfares. No man deficient in spirit and fortitude would ever have made such an attempt. Both of the invasions under his personal leading were characterized by similar daring. The cowardice was on the part of those who hurled the epithet at him. Their own writers admit it by inference, if not in so many words.

One of the traditions of Franklin county, which must have been well-known to be remembered after the lapse of a century, is to the effect that in the last battle, variously known as the fight on Klock's field, or Fox's Mills, both sides ran away from each other. Were it true of both sides, it would not be an extraordinary example. Panics, more or less in proportion, have occurred in the best of armies. There was a partial one after Wagram, after Castalla, after Solferino, and at our first Bull Run. But these are only a few among scores of instances that might be cited. What is still more curious, while a single personal enemy of Sir John charged him with quitting the field, the whole community abused his antagonist, Gen. Van Rensselaer, for not capturing Sir John and his troops, when a court martial decided that while the General did all he could, his troops were very "bashful," as the Japanese term it, about getting under close fire, and they had to be withdrawn from it to keep the majority from running home bodily. The fact is that the American State levies, quasi-regulars, under the gallant Col. Brown, had experienced such a terrible defeat in the morning, that it took away from the militia all their appetite for another fight with the same adversaries in the evening. Sir John's conduct would have been excusable if he had quitted the field, because he had been wounded, and a wound at this time, in the midst of an enemy's country, was a casualty which might have placed him, at the mercy of an Administration which was, not slow, with or without law, at inflicting cruelties, and even hanging in haste and trying at leisure.

But Sir John did not quit the field prematurely. He was not there to fight, to oblige his adversaries; his tactics were to avoid any battle which was not absolutely necessary to secure his retreat. He repulsed his pursuers and he absolutely returned to Canada, carrying with him as prisoners an American detachment which sought to intercept and impede his movements. While Van Rensselaer, the scion of a race which displayed uncommon courage in the Colonial service, was being tried and sought to be made a scape-goat for the shortcomings of his superiors and inferiors, Sir John was receiving the compliments, in public orders, of his own superior, Gen. Haldimand, to whom the German officers in America have given in their published correspondence and narratives the highest praise as a professional soldier and therefore judge of military merit. What is more, as a farther demonstration of the injustice of ordinary history, the severe Governor Clinton was either with Van Rensselaer or near at hand, and consequently as much to blame as the latter for the escape of Sir John. Stone, who wrote at a time when as yet there were plenty of living contemporaries, distinctly says that Gov. Clinton was with Gen. Van Rensselaer just before the battle and remained at Fort Plain, while the battle was taking place a few miles distant. Finally, the testimony taken before the court martial indicates that the Americans were vastly superior in numbers to, if not more than double, Sir John's whites and Indians; and it was the want, as usual, of true fighting pluck in the Indians, and their abandonment of their white associates which made the result at all indecisive for the Loyalists. Had the redskins stood their ground it is very doubtful if the other side would have stopped short of Schenectady. All accounts agree that the invaders had been overworked and were overburdened, having performed extraordinary labors and marches; whereas, except as to ordinary expeditiousness, the Americans, quasi regulars and militia, were fresh and in light marching order, for they were just from home. So much stress has been laid on this fight because it has been always unfairly told, except before the court martial which exonerated Van Rensselaer. Ordinary human judgment makes the philosopher weep and laugh: weep in sorrow at the fallacy of history, and laugh in bitterness at the follies and prejudices of the uneducated and unreflecting.

Some of the greatest commanders who have ever lived have not escaped the accusation of want of spirit at one time or another. Ever Napoleon has been blamed for not suffering himself to be killed at Waterloo, thus ending his career in a blaze of glory. Malice vented itself in such a charge against the gallant leader who saved the middle zone to the Union and converted the despondency of retreat and defeat into victory. It is perhaps a remarkable fact that the most always select two vituperative charges, the most repugnant to a man of honor, perhaps because they are those to which they themselves are most open—falsehood and poltroonery; forgetting that it is not the business of a commander to throw away a life which does

not belong to himself individually but to the general welfare of his troops. Mer: "physical courage," as has been well said by a veteran soldier, "is largely a question of nerves." Moral courage is the God-like quality, the lever which in all ages has moved this world. Moreover it is the corner-stone of progress; and without it brute insensibility to danger would have left the nineteenth century in the same condition as the "Stone Age." A man, bred as Sir John had been, who had the courage to give up everything for principle, and with less than a modern battalion of whites, plunge again and again into the territory of his enemies, bristling with forts and stockaded posts, who could put in the field forty-five regiments, of which seventeen were in Albany and five in Tryon counties, the actual scenes of conflict, besides distinct corps of State levies raised for the protection of the frontiers, in which every other man was his deadly foe, and the majority capital marksmen, that could shoot off a squirrel's head at a hundred yards—such a man must have had an awful amount of a hero in his composition. Americans would have been only too willing to crown him with this halo, if he had fought on their side instead of fighting so desperately against them.

And now, in conclusion, let me call the brief attention of this audience to a few additional facts. Sir William Johnson was the son of his own deeds and the creature of the bounty of his sovereign. He owed nothing to the people. They had not added either to his influence, affluence, position or power. If this was true of the father as a beneficiary of the Crown, how much more so was the son. The people undertook to deprive the latter of that which they had neither bestowed nor augmented. They injured him in every way that a man could be injured; and they made that which was the most commendable in him—his loyalty to a gracious benefactor, his crime, and punished him for that which they should have honored. They struck; and he had both the courage, the power, and the opportunity to strike back. His retaliation may not have been consistent with the literal admonition of the Gospel, but there was nothing in it inconsistent with the ordinary temper of humanity and manliness.

Ladies and gentlemen, the people of this era have no conception of the fearful significance of Loyalty, 100 years since. Loyalty, then, was almost paramount to religion: next after a man's duty to his God was his allegiance to his prince. "*Noblesse oblige*" has been blazoned as the highest commendation of the otherwise vicious aristocracy of France. It is charged that when the perishing Bourbon dynasty was in direst need of defenders it discovered

them "neither in its titled nobility in its native soldiers," but in mercenary. Whereas in America George III. found champions in the best citizens of the land foremost in the front rank of these stout John Johnson. Hume, who is anything but imaginative or enthusiastic writer, calls LOYALTY AND PATRIOTISM together; and his philosophical words this vindication of John Johnson is committed to your calm unprejudiced judgment: "*The most inviolable attachment to the laws of our country everywhere acknowledged a capital virtue and where the people are not so happy have any legislature but a SINGLE PRINCIPLE THE STRICTEST LOYALTY IS, IN THAT CASE, THE TRUEST PATRIOTISM.*"

"Hopes have precarious life;
They are oft blighted, withered, snapt shee
But FAITHFULNESS can feed on SUFFERING,
And knows no disappointment."

NOTE.

A letter lies before the author of the Address, which is too pertinent and correlative to be omitted. It is from the distinguished officer and one of the most reflecting men of this generation, who is wise a collateral relation of one of the prominent Continental generals. In it he writes says:

"The more I read and understand the American Revolution, the more I wonder at our success. I doubt if there were more than States decidedly Whig—Massachusetts, Virginia, Massachusetts [morally] over New Hampshire and the northern part of Rhode Island—dragged them after her. Massachusetts people were Aryan [by with a strong injection of Jewish [just The population of southern Rhode Island Connecticut were divided—more Loyal Rebel. New York was Tory. New York—eastern part, followed New York; western part, Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania was Maryland was divided. North Carolina followed her, partly South Carolina. North Carolina had many Tories. Georgia followed South Carolina. Two parties constituted the strength of the Whigs—the Democratic republicans of Massachusetts, and wherever organization extended, and the [Protestant] aristocracy of Virginia, which was loyal to the King, but would not bend to the democratic Parliament. The Scotch [Protestant] Papist] Irish in New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina were Rebels to the back. The Dutch families in New York, the Dutch notes in South Carolina, likewise. The party, the Germans, the Catholic Irish, the Quakers were loyalist. The Dissenters everywhere were Rebels.

